



Policy Analysis and Decision Making

with Emphasis on Chronic Non-communicable
Diseases

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The Analysis of Public Problems

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Key points

- Types of inquiry
- Analysis of public problems.
- Policy analysis: overview, advantages, disadvantages
- General features
- Styles and products of the analysis
- Problem definition

Different Types of Inquiries; Different Objectives

- **Disciplinary Research**
- **Health services research**
- **Health policy analysis**
- **Health program evaluation**

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Figure 1.3 Comparison of Objectives of Health Services Research with Other Types of Inquiry

Type of Inquiry	Objective
Disciplinary Research	To explain biological or social phenomena $X \longrightarrow Y$
Health Services Research	To describe and assess the performance of the healthcare system $\begin{matrix} \text{Structure} & \text{Process} & \text{Outcome} \\ X \longrightarrow & & Y \end{matrix}$
Health Program Evaluation	To evaluate the effect of health policies and programs $\begin{matrix} x_0 & \longrightarrow & y_0 \\ x_1 & \longrightarrow & y_1 \\ x_2 & \longrightarrow & y_2 \\ x_3 & \longrightarrow & y_3 \end{matrix}$
Health Policy Analysis	To analyze and compare alternative (1) problem definitions, and (2) health policy solutions <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>(1) Problem Analysis</p> $\begin{matrix} x_1 & \longrightarrow & \downarrow \\ \text{vs.} & & \\ x_2 & \longrightarrow & x \\ \text{vs.} & & \\ x_3 & \longrightarrow & \uparrow \end{matrix}$ </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>(2) Solution Analysis</p> $\begin{matrix} y_1 & \longrightarrow & \downarrow \\ \text{vs.} & & \\ y_2 & \longrightarrow & y \\ \text{vs.} & & \\ y_3 & \longrightarrow & \uparrow \end{matrix}$ </div> </div>

Lu Ann Aday, et al. Evaluating the Medical Care System: Effectiveness, Efficiency and Equity. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Health Administration Press, 1993. 4

Health Policy and Health Services Research

“The distinction drawn...between health services research and policy analysis is that ...the production of knowledge...defines the primary contributions of health services research and ...the application of knowledge...represents the primary contributions of health policy analysis to governmental decision making.”

(Aday et al, 1993)

Why Policy Analysis?

■ **Changing policy context:**

- Increasing interest from governments, private sector, interest groups and the general informed public that demands transparency and accountability in decision-making and results and performance.
- New and/or repositioned actors: lobbyists and interest groups
- Knowledge economy and society (distrust of elites, desire to be informed, consulted, involved.)

■ **Avoid “shooting from the hip”**

■ **Think seriously about problems and solutions**

Brief historical perspective

- Term first used by Charles Lindblom in 1958
- Formal development within the policy sciences in the sixties.
- Some authors track its origin to the XIXth (social policy development in Europe)
- In the USA, more instrumental than in Europe.
- Increasing interest from governments, private sector, interest groups and the general informed public that demands transparency and accountability in decision making and results.

Policy Analysis

- An interdisciplinary field of knowledge and specialized applied research social science research that applies systematic forms of inquiry, evaluation and argumentation, theories and methods to assess policy alternatives.
- A structured problem-oriented approach to public problems and decisions.
- **Key aspects:**
 - Systematic applied social science research
 - Future focused
 - Multidisciplinary teams
 - Applies multiple research methods
 - Attention to values and political aspects
 - The process and the product have the same names.

What is policy analysis? Several definitions...

The use of reason and evidence to select the best policy among a number of alternatives to address a particular policy problem. (MacRae and Wilde).

“An applied social science that utilizes multiple research methods, in argumentation and debate contexts, to create, estimate critically, and communicate knowledge that is relevant to the policies.” (Dunn)

“A way of speaking truth to power”. (Wildavsky)

“A process through which one identifies and evaluates “alternative policies or programs that are intended to lessen or resolve social, economic or physical problems” (Patton & Sawicki).

A good analysis (or even a good decision) does not guarantee that the optimal solution will be selected and/or implemented.

A practical definition...

“Policy analysis is client oriented advice relevant to public, or private, decisions and informed by social values.”

Weiner & Vining, p. 27

Advantages

- Identifies, verifies complex problems.
- Compares alternative ways to address an issue.
- Frames information in a useful format for decision-makers.
- Informs the political debate.
- Can improve the quality of decisions.
- Provides a bargaining chip.
- Suggests how to translate ideas into viable policies.

Disadvantages

- Inability to choose its own problems.
- Problems and the context in which they occur are highly complex.
- Perceptions and values are subjective and often in conflict.
- Uncertainty about the future.
- Use is limited for believers of bargaining or muddling.
- The capacity of any instrument is always limited.


What policy analysis can and cannot do..

- **Policy** analysis can assist decision makers in **choosing a preferred course of action** from **complex alternatives** and under **uncertain conditions**.

- **Policy analysis is not** a panacea or a substitute for inadequate policymaking processes, defects of public decisions, bad judgment on the part of analysts or policymakers, an exact science or a tool for advocacy by the analyst for his/her own views.

Types of Policy Analysis


	When	Purpose
Ex ante (a priori, pre hoc, prospective)	Before selection, recommendation and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Predictive (To anticipate likely effects that might result from the adoption of a particular policy) ■ Prescriptive (recommendations to achieve a particular result), to inform process of decision making and deliberation
Ex post (a posteriori, post hoc, retrospective); also known as program evaluation.	After policy adoption, and implementation has begun.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Descriptive (also interpretative), to describe the effects of a policy already implemented ■ Evaluative (were the policy objectives achieved?) Assess whether policy satisfies established policy outputs and outcomes.



Basic and Applied Policy Analysis

Characteristic	Basic	Applied
Origin of Problem/Opportunity	Literature (theory); peers	Government clients/public
Typical Methods	Quantitative Modelling	Development of Sound Argument
Type of Research	Original Data Collection	Synthesis/Evaluation of Existing Data
Primary Aim	Improve Theory	Improve Practice
Dissemination	Referred Article/Book	Briefing Note; Issue Paper; Memo to Cabinet; Policy Statement; Green Paper; White Paper

Source: Dunn, W. 1994, pp. 424.



Types of Analysis (US examples)

- **Scientific**
 - Search for truth and build theory about policy actions and effects
 - May be too theoretical for most decision makers
 - Examples (US): academic social scientists, National Academy of Sciences

- **Professional**
 - Analyze alternatives to solve problems
 - Goal is for practical value
 - Research can be too narrow due to time or resource constraints
 - Examples (US): Brookings Institution, American Enterprise Institute, Congressional Budget Office, General Accounting Office

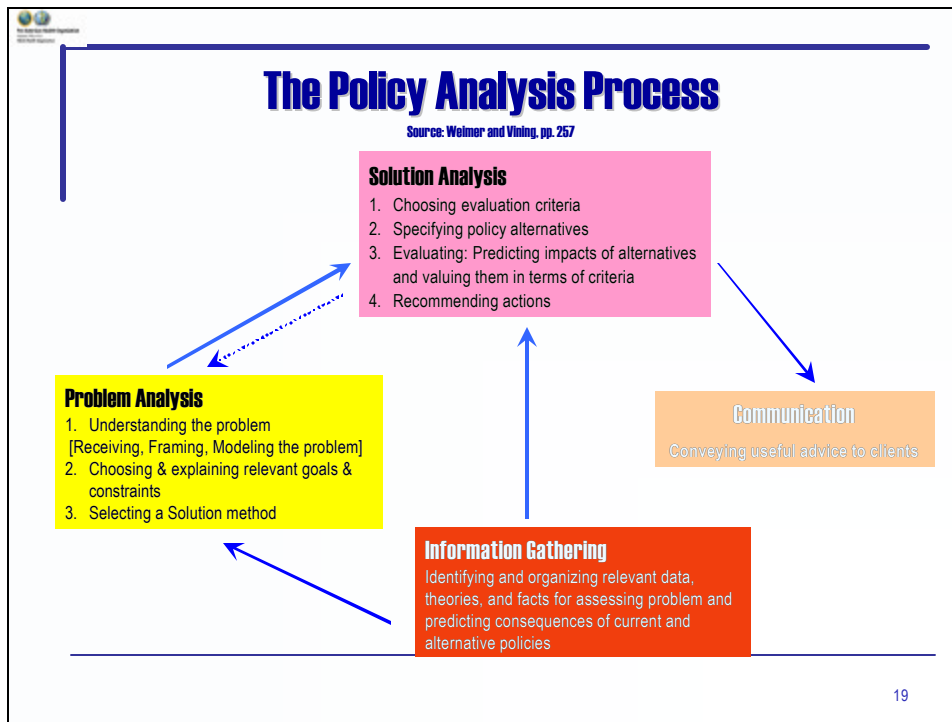
- **Political**
 - Advocate and support preferred policies
 - Often ideological or partisan; may lack analytical depth
 - Examples (US): Sierra Club, AFL-CIO, AARP, Heritage Foundation

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The Stages Heuristic

- A framework of the policy process that breaks the policy process down into stages. (some authors identify six, others eight and so on).
- Example: Bardach's Eight Steps
 1. Define the problem
 2. Assemble evidence
 3. Identify options
 4. Select evaluation criteria
 5. Project outcomes
 6. Confront trade-offs
 7. Decide
 8. Tell your story

Another way of looking at the analysis: The Problem and The Solution



- Not all public problems are amenable to policy analysis, but when they are, the analysis can support decision making to:**
- Determine whether a new policy is required to address the problem
 - If a policy already exists, determine whether it needs to be modified or terminated.
 - Analyze one policy (retrospectively or prospectively)
 - Compare two or more policies that address a similar problem.
 - Assess future implications of current or new policies
 - Explore stages in the development of particular policies.
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The Policy Analysis Process: the Classic Policy Analytic Format

PROBLEM ANALYSIS
Problem Definition/Formulation: Analyst's statement of the policy problem to be addressed. a) why the problem is a concern that needs to be addressed through public policy? b) potential cause (s) of the problem.

SOLUTION ANALYSIS

II. Selection of Criteria: Criteria connote measurement; yard stick by which to assess the efficacy of policy alternatives. (e.g. social values of efficiency and equity, political feasibility, effectiveness).

III. Construction of Alternatives: The development of feasible alternatives to solve or mitigate the problem is a frequently underestimated, and creative phase. Alternatives should include policy options that key political actors are proposing or seem to have on their mind, but should also propose or identify alternatives that may be superior to those under political discussion.

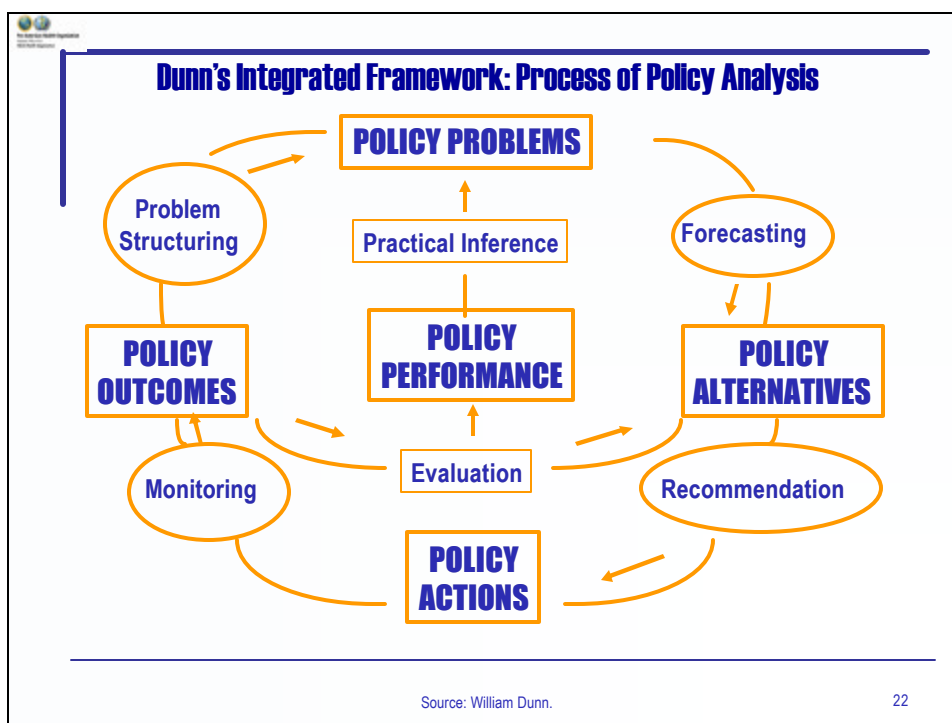
IV. Comparison of the Alternatives: An analysis of possible policy alternatives based on their satisfaction of the various criteria, and regarding the projected outcomes or impacts of each alternative. The recommendation should be treated as a useful but not overriding element in the analysis; it is often the least valuable element to the policymaker.

COMMUNICATE RESULTS

V. Consideration of Organizational Constraints (Implementation Analysis): An analysis of whether the organization(s) charged with responsibility for operating the policy or program can put it in place successfully. (e.g. bureaucratic will (commitment) and the technical and institutional capacity)

VI. Implementation and evaluation of the program: expert analysis (evaluation research use of objective, scientific criteria), market accountability (relying on aggregate consumer tastes), and political accountability (citizen support/opposition through democratic processes).

Source: 21

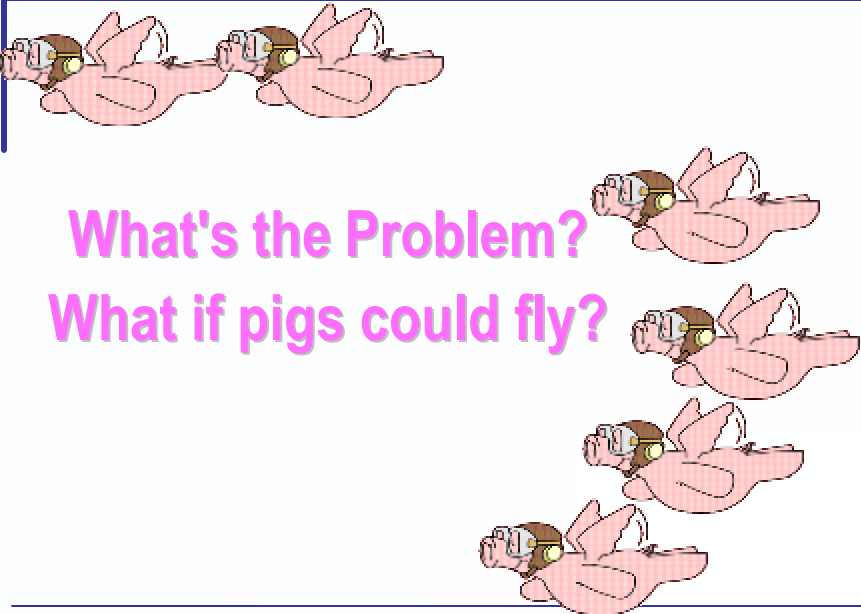


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Defining the policy problem is easier said than done...



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What's the Problem?
What if pigs could fly?

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1. **A health problem?**
 - **Pig droppings spreading disease**
(Policy intervention: pigs who fly are required to wear diapers/pigs who are not wearing diapers are not allowed to fly)
2. **An air safety problem?**
 - **Flying pigs cause accidents.**
(Policy intervention: restrict pigs flying area/force pigs to wear seat belts/prevent pigs who drink from flying)
3. **An agricultural policy problem?**
 - **Farmers loose the monopoly on pigs.**
(Policy intervention: regulate market of pigs)
4. **An foreign policy problem?**
 - **Keep foreign pigs out.**
(Policy intervention: enforce (or enact) appropriate immigration law)
5. **An animal rights issue?**
 - **Pigs are free to fly!**
(Policy intervention: enforce the animal rights law)
6. **An environmental problem?**
 - **Are pigs a nuisance species in the skies?**
(Policy intervention: establish hours when pigs are allowed to fly)

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We want to learn how to look at problems
 from multiple perspectives to achieve the
 best problem definition
 (and possible/feasible solutions)

One example

- **Raising rates of lung cancer among certain population groups could be framed as:**
 - the failure of individuals to stop smoking, or
 - of the health care providers to provide adequate and timely information, or
 - as a failure of the government to regulate smoking in public places, etc.
 - The opportunity of the government to improve research, to raise taxes by increasing the price of cigarettes.
 - All of the above

Another example

- **Prevailing and increasing obesity among young adults and among certain population groups could be framed as:**
 - the failure of individual will to change their eating behaviors, or
 - the inability or capacity of health care providers to provide adequate and timely information, or
 - as a failure of the government to
 - Regulate trade
 - eliminate harmful substances from the general diet
 - Increase safe places for people to exercise
 - **Modify school lunches**
 - All of the above
 - Etc.

Importance of problem definition in decision-making

“There is a difference between a condition and a problem ... conditions become defined as problems when we come to believe that we should do something about them .. the problem doesn't have to get any worse or better”.

Kingdon (1984: 103-4):

Importance of problem definition in decision-making

- **Problem definition depends on:**
 - How issues are framed, portrayed.
 - How obvious is the crisis that the problem evokes.
 - How it is measured.
- Endless ways to look at a particular problem, yet limited time, money and energy.
- Therefore, highly complex issues are simplified; focus on certain aspects happens at the expense of other aspects/elements.

Problem Definition

Translation of a situation that is perceived as important into a problem that can be solved

- Indicators reveal its existence, magnitude, severity
- Events or crisis call attention on a problem
- The results of evaluations (or monitoring/surveillance) show troublesome conditions, etc.

Challenges: Public policy problems, particularly social problems

- May show up in ways that are difficult to address
- “Inherently multidimensional”, overlap, intersect, contradict
- They are ill defined, that is, they are “wicked problems”
- The consensus over social goals may be illusory.
- Decision-makers have different preferences and values, often conflicting
- The definition of a policy problem is not completely scientific or systematic: creativity, sagacity, socially constructed.

Therefore, let's discuss..

- How would I go about structuring the problem?
- Do we already have a policy? Do we need a new one or tweak the old one?
- Does the metaphor seem to obviate the need for evidence, or does it bias the kind of information opponents might bring to bear on a conflict/the issue?” (D. Stone)
- Who are the stakeholders?
- What are the levers inside and outside the health sector?
- What are the preferences, motivations, interests of decision-makers?
- Etc.

Suggested Reading(s)

- Aday, L. A et al. (2005) *Evaluating the Healthcare System. Effectiveness. Efficiency and Equity*. Ann Arbor, MI: Health Administration Press. Third edition. Pp. 1-56. (Introduction to Health Services Research and Policy Analysis)
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- Patton, C. y D. Sawicki. (1993) *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. Second edition. Pp. 1-39 (The Need for Simple Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning, The Policy Analysis Process).